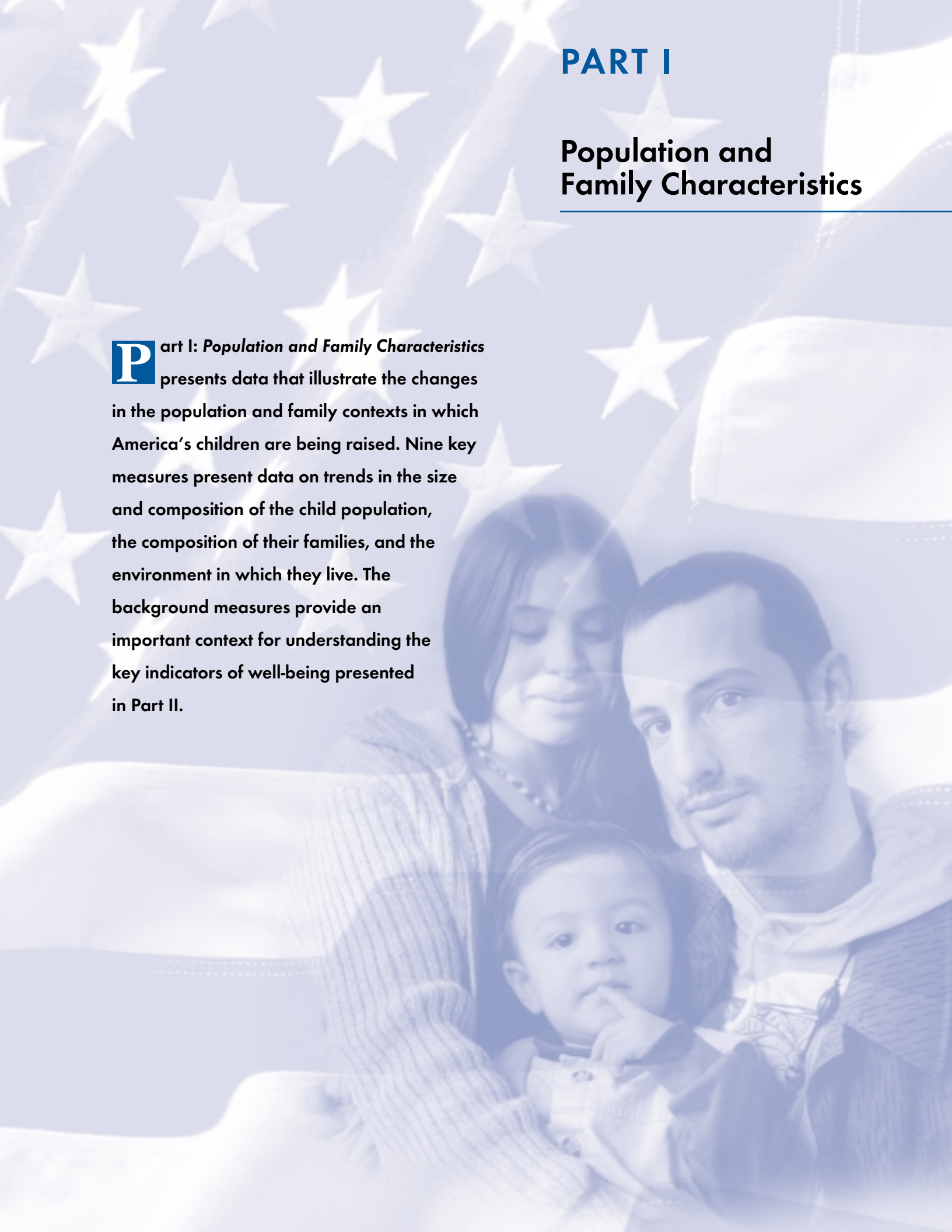
PART I

Population and Family Characteristics

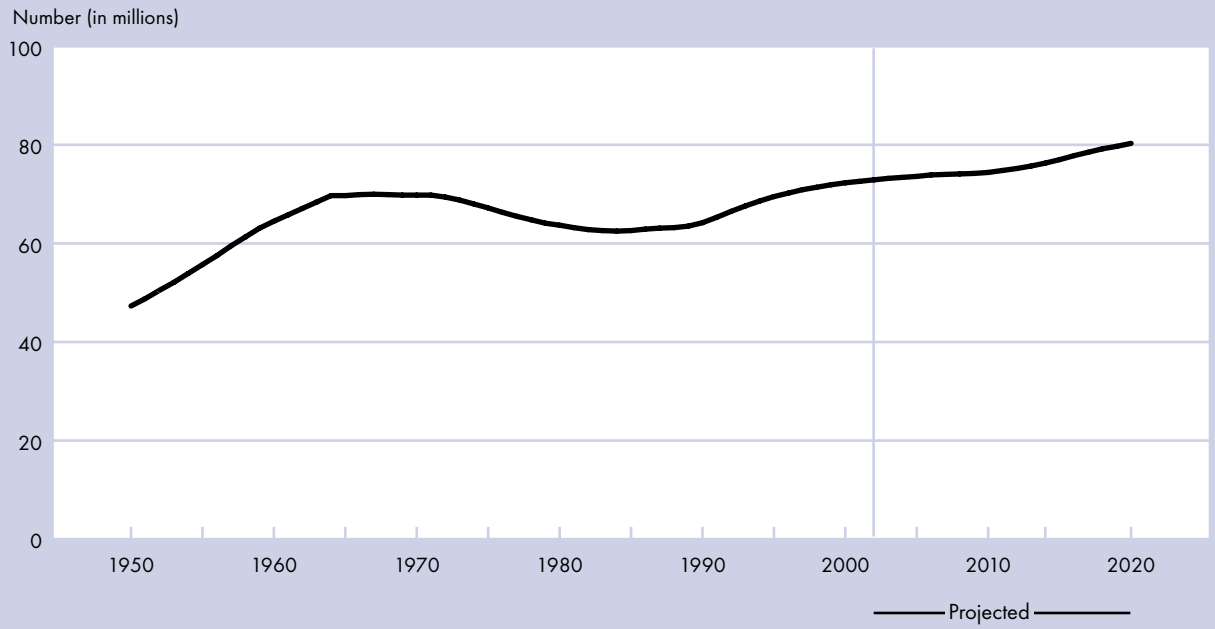
Part I: *Population and Family Characteristics* presents data that illustrate the changes in the population and family contexts in which America's children are being raised. Nine key measures present data on trends in the size and composition of the child population, the composition of their families, and the environment in which they live. The background measures provide an important context for understanding the key indicators of well-being presented in Part II.



Child Population

The number of children determines the demand for schools, health care, and other services and facilities that serve children and their families.

Figure POP1 **Number of children under age 18 in the United States, 1950-2001 and projected 2002-20**



NOTE: Population projections are based on the Census 2000 counts.
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates and Projections.

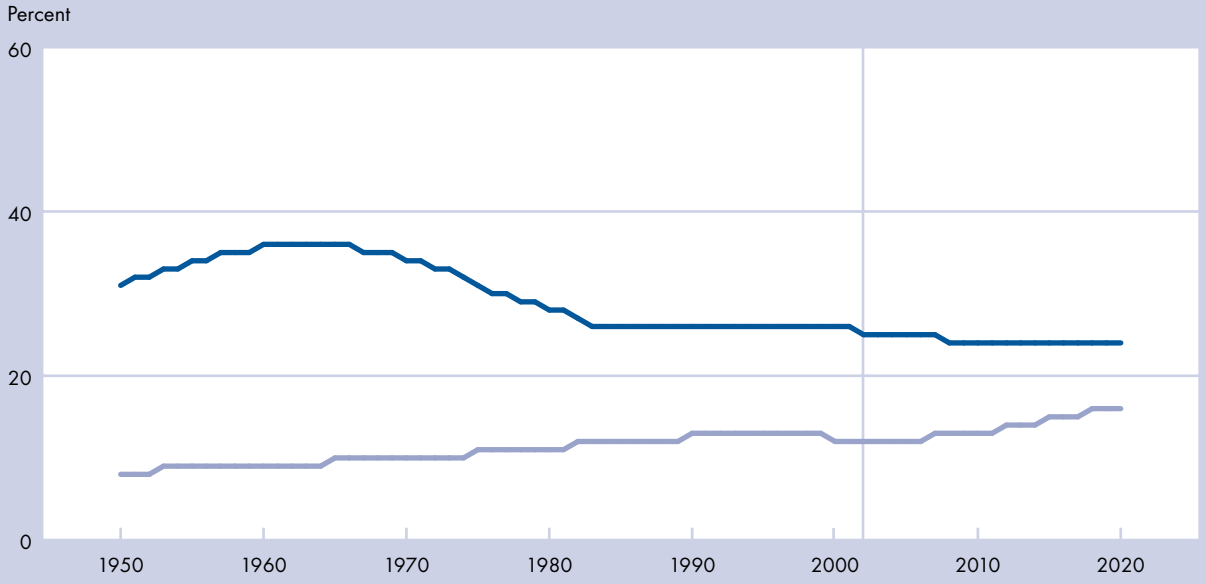
- In 2001, there were 72.6 million children in the United States, 300,000 more than in 2000. This number is projected to increase to 80.3 million in 2020.
- The number of children under 18 has grown during the last half-century, increasing about half again since 1950.
- During the "baby boom" (1946 to 1964), the number of children grew rapidly.
- During the 1970s and 1980s, the number of children declined and then grew slowly.
- Beginning in 1990, the rate of growth in the number of children increased, although not as rapidly as during the baby boom.
- In 2001, there were approximately equal numbers of children—between 23 and 25 million—in each age group 0 to 5, 6 to 11, and 12 to 17 years of age.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table POP1 on page 75.

Children as a Proportion of the Population

Though children represent a smaller percentage of the population today than in 1960, they are nevertheless a stable and substantial portion of the population.

Figure POP2 **Children under age 18 and adults ages 65 and older as a percentage of the U.S. population, 1950-2001 and projected 2002-20**



NOTE: Population projections are based on the Census 2000 counts.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates and Projections.

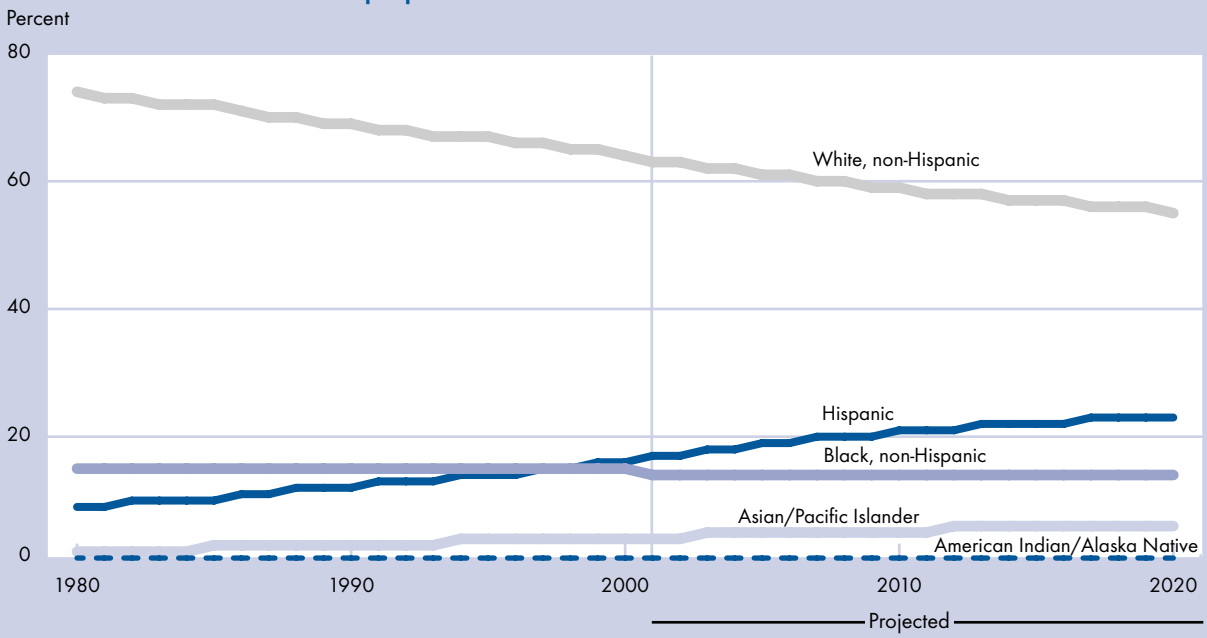
- In 2001, children made up 25 percent of the population, down from a peak of 36 percent at the end of the "baby boom."
- Since the mid-1960s, children have been decreasing as a proportion of the total U.S. population.
- Children are projected to remain a fairly stable percentage of the total population. They are projected to comprise 24 percent of the population in 2020.
- In contrast, senior citizens (adults ages 65 and older) have increased as a percentage of the total population since 1950, from 8 to 12 percent in 2001. By 2020, they are projected to make up 16 percent of the population.
- Together, children and senior citizens make up the "dependent population" (those persons who, because of their age, are less likely to be employed than others). In 1950, children made up 79 percent of the dependent population; by 2001, they made up 67 percent. This percentage is expected to continue to decrease, to 60 percent in 2020.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table POP2 on page 76.

Racial and Ethnic Composition

Racial and ethnic diversity has grown dramatically in the United States in the last three decades. This increased diversity appeared first among children, and later in the older population and is projected to increase even more in the decades to come.

Figure POP3 **Percentage of children under age 18 by race and Hispanic origin, 1980-2000 and projected 2001-20**



NOTE: All population figures for the year 2000 shown here are estimates based on the 1990 U.S. Census; they do not reflect Census 2000 counts. Population figures for 2001-20 are projections.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates and Projections.

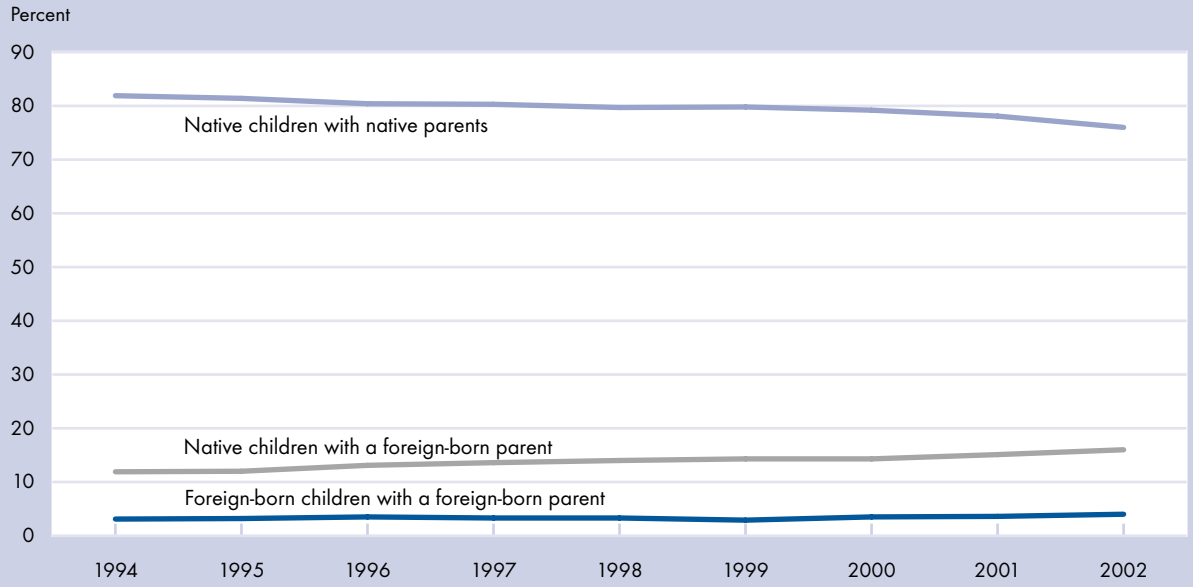
- In 2000, 64 percent of U.S. children were White, non-Hispanic; 16 percent were Hispanic; 15 percent were Black, non-Hispanic; 4 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander; and 1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native.
- The percentage of children who are White, non-Hispanic has decreased from 74 percent in 1980 to 64 percent in 2000.
- The percentages of Black, non-Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native children have been fairly stable during the period from 1980 to 2000.
- The number of Hispanic children has increased faster than that of any other racial and ethnic group, growing from 9 percent of the child population in 1980 to 16 percent in 2000. By 2020, it is projected that more than 1 in 5 children in the United States will be of Hispanic origin.
- The percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander children doubled from 2 to 4 percent of all U.S. children between 1980 and 2000. Their percentage is projected to continue to increase to 6 percent in 2020.
- Increases in the percentages among Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander children reflect higher fertility and immigration rates than those of other groups. Much of the growth in the percentage of Hispanic children is due to the relatively high fertility of Hispanic women.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table POP3 on page 77.

Children of at Least One Foreign-Born Parent

The foreign-born population of the United States has risen dramatically since 1970.[1] This increase in the past generation has largely been from Latin America and Asia, and represents an increase in the diversity of language and cultural backgrounds of children growing up in the United States.[2] As a result of language and cultural barriers confronting children and their parents, children with foreign-born parents may need additional resources both at school and at home to successfully progress in school and transition to adulthood. Data on the nativity of the population have been available from the Current Population Survey since 1994 and from the Decennial Census since 1850.[3]

Figure POP4 **Percentage of children under age 18 by nativity of child and parents, 1994-2002**



NOTE: Includes all children under age 18 except children in group quarters. Children living in households with no parents present are not shown in this figure, but are included in the bases for the percentages. Native parents means that all of the parents that the child lives with are native born, while foreign-born means that one or both of the child's parents are foreign-born. Anyone with United States citizenship at birth is considered native, which includes persons born in the U.S., in U.S. outlying areas, and persons born abroad with at least one American parent.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, March Current Population Survey.

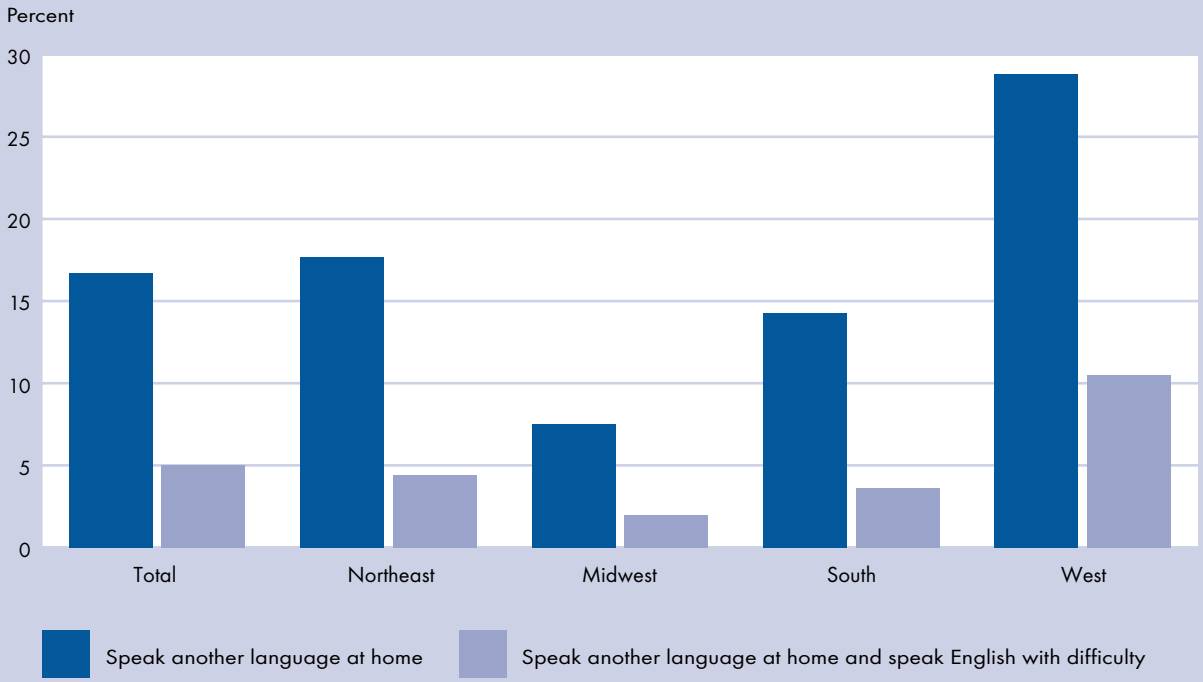
- In 2002, 16 percent of children were native children with at least one foreign-born parent, and 4 percent were foreign-born children with at least one foreign-born parent. Overall, the percent of children living in the U.S. with at least one parent who was foreign-born rose from 15 percent in 1999 to 20 percent in 2002.
- The percentage of children whose parents have less than a high school diploma is much higher among children with at least one foreign-born parent than among children with native parents. In 2002, 41 percent of foreign-born children with at least one foreign-born parent had a parent with less than a high school degree, compared with 36 percent of native children with at least one foreign-born parent and 10 percent of native children with native parents.
- In 2002, foreign-born children with foreign-born parents were more likely than native children with foreign-born parents to live below the poverty level, 27 and 20 percent, respectively.
- Children with a foreign-born parent more often live in central cities than children with native parents. In 2002, 42 percent of foreign-born children with a foreign-born parent lived in central cities, 41 percent of native children with at least one foreign-born parent lived in central cities, and only 26 percent of native children of native parents lived in central cities.
- Children with at least one foreign-born parent, regardless of their own nativity status, more often lived in a household with two parents present. In 2002, 81 percent of children with at least one foreign-born parent lived with two parents, compared with only 69 percent of children with native parents.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table POP4 on pages 78-79. Endnotes begin on page 63.

Difficulty Speaking English

Children who speak languages other than English at home and who also have difficulty speaking English[4] may face greater challenges progressing in school and, once they become adults, in the labor market. Once it is determined that a student speaks another language, school officials must, by law, evaluate the child's English ability to determine whether the student needs services (such as special instruction to improve his or her English) and provide these services if needed.

Figure POP5 **Percentage of children ages 5 to 17 who speak a language other than English at home and who have difficulty speaking English by region, 1999**



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, October Current Population Survey. Tabulated by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

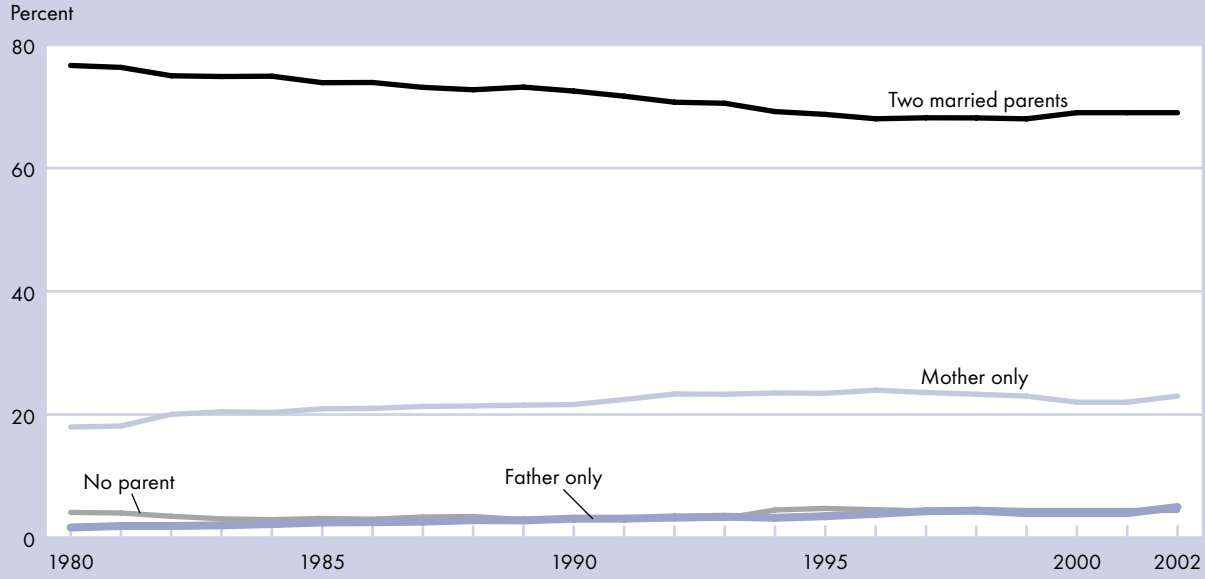
- The number of school-age children (ages 5 to 17) who spoke a language other than English at home and who had difficulty speaking English was 2.6 million in 1999, double the number (1.3 million) in 1979. This represented 5 percent of all school-age children in the United States in 1999.
- The percentage of children who have difficulty speaking English varies by region of the country, from 2 percent of children in the Midwest to 11 percent of children in the West.
- Likewise, the percentage of children who speak another language at home (with or without difficulty speaking English) varies by region of the country, from 8 percent of children in the Midwest to 29 percent of children in the West. This difference is due largely to differing concentrations of immigrants and their descendants in the regions.
- White, non-Hispanic and Black, non-Hispanic children are less likely than children of Hispanic origin or other races to have difficulty speaking English. One percent of White, non-Hispanic and Black, non-Hispanic children spoke another language at home and had difficulty speaking English in 1999, compared with 23 percent of children of Hispanic origin and 12 percent of children of other races.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table POP5 on page 80. Endnotes begin on page 63.

Family Structure and Children's Living Arrangements

The number of parents a child lives with is associated with the economic, parental, and community resources available to children and their well-being. On average, the presence of two married parents is associated with more favorable outcomes for children both through, and independent of, added income. Children who live in a household with only one parent are substantially more likely to have family incomes below the poverty line, and to have more difficulty in their lives than are children who live in a household with two married parents (biological, step, or adoptive).[5]

Figure POP6 **Percentage of children under age 18 by presence of married parents in household, 1980-2002**



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, March Current Population Survey.

NOTE: The category "two married parents" includes children who live with a biological, step, or adoptive parent who is married with his or her spouse present. If a second parent is present and not married to the first parent, then the child is identified as living with a single parent.

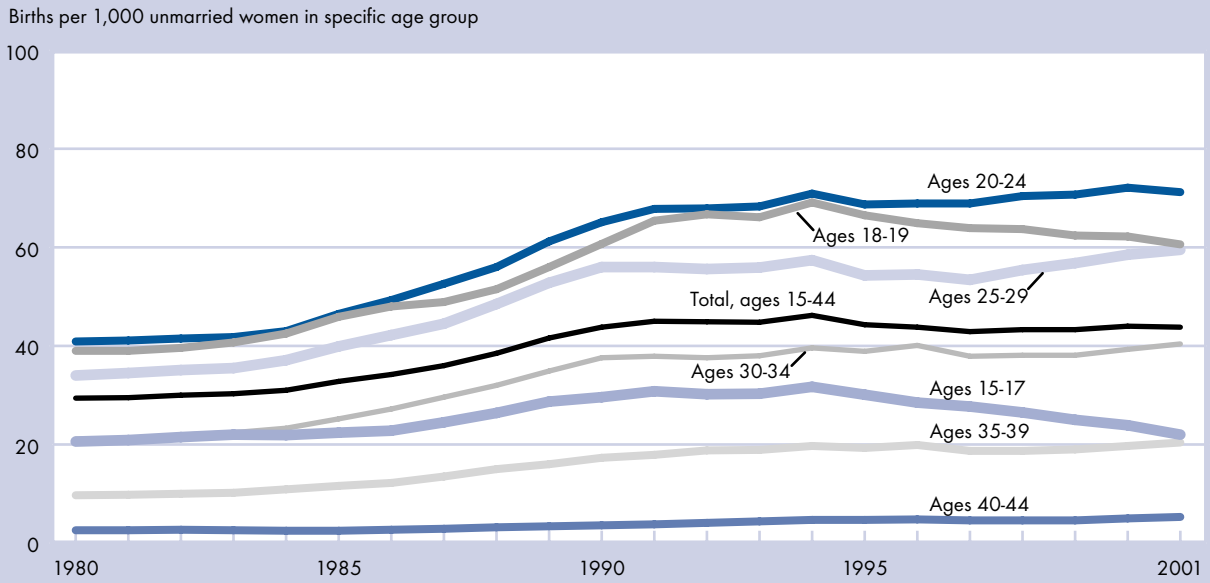
- In 2002, 69 percent of children under age 18 lived with two married parents, down from 77 percent in 1980. However, the percentage has remained stable since 1995, ending a decades-long downward trend.
- In 2002, about one-fifth (23 percent) of children lived with only their mothers, 5 percent lived with only their fathers, and 4 percent lived with neither of their parents.[6]
- White, non-Hispanic children are much more likely than Black children and Hispanic children to live with two married parents. In 2002, 77 percent of White, non-Hispanic children lived with two married parents, compared with 38 percent of Black children and 65 percent of Hispanic children.
- Since 1995, the share of Black children living with two married parents has increased significantly from 33 percent in 1995 to 38 percent in 2002. The proportion of Hispanic children living with two married parents was not significantly different in 1995 than it was in 2002.
- Both Black children and Hispanic children were significantly less likely to live with a single parent in 2002 compared with 1995. The proportion of Black children living with a single parent declined from 56 percent in 1995 to 53 percent in 2002, while the proportion of Hispanic children living with a single parent declined from 33 percent to 30 percent over the same time period.
- While the proportion of all children living with single parents was the same in 2002 as in 1995, and the proportion of Black children and of Hispanic children living with single parents declined over this time period, these patterns were primarily affected by changes in the proportion of children living with a single mother. The proportion of all children living with a single father actually increased from 4 percent in 1995 to 5 percent in 2002.
- These changes in family structure are especially important in light of the large body of research linking family structure to many of the other indicators in this report.[7]
- The measure of detailed living arrangements of children (POP5.B in *America's Children 2001*) is not included in this year's report because recent data are not available. For information on the detailed living arrangements of children, see the following U.S. Census Bureau report: P70-74 *Living Arrangements of Children* available at http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/child/la-child.html.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table POP6 on page 81. Endnotes begin on page 63.

Births to Unmarried Women

Increases in births to unmarried women are among the many changes in American society that have affected family structure and the economic security of children.[8] Children of unmarried mothers are at higher risk of having adverse birth outcomes, such as low birthweight and infant mortality, and are more likely to live in poverty than children of married mothers.[9-13]

Figure POP7.A **Birth rates for unmarried women by age of mother, 1980-2001**

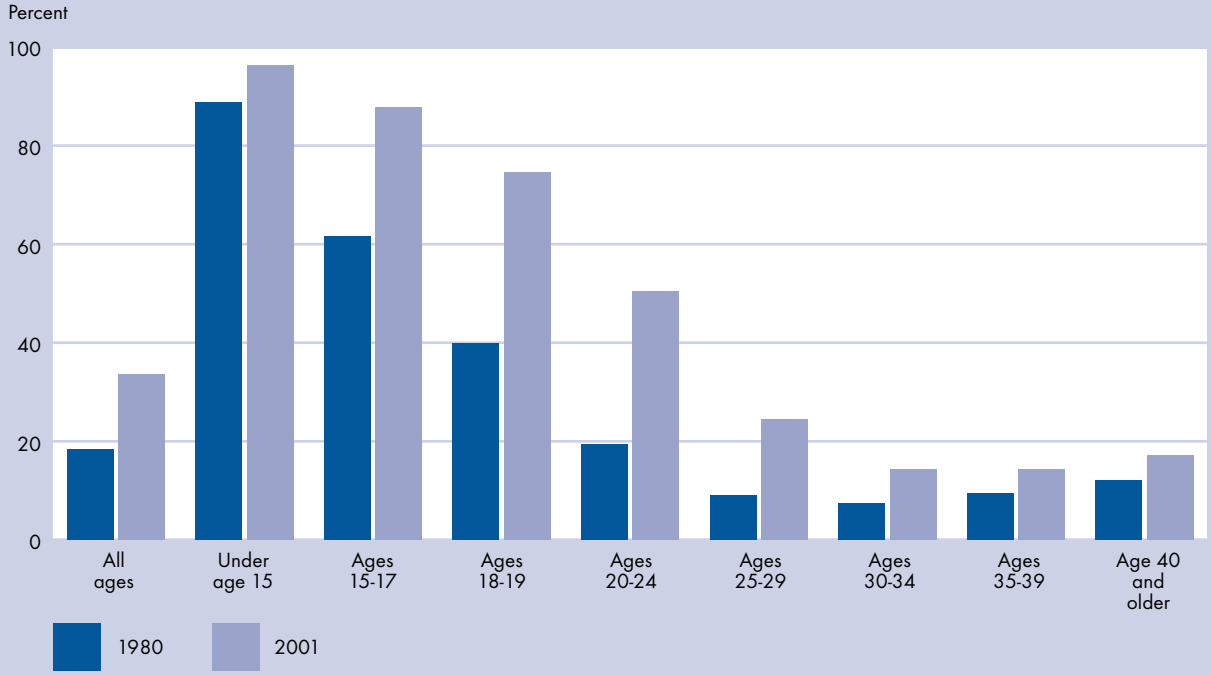


SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System.

- There were 44 births for every 1,000 unmarried women ages 15 to 44 in 2001.[14,15]
- Between 1980 and 1994, the birth rate for unmarried women ages 15 to 44 increased from 29 to 46 per 1,000. Between 1995 and 2001, the rate has fluctuated little, ranging from 43 to 44 per 1,000.[12,14,15]
- Between 1980 and 1994, birth rates increased sharply for unmarried women in all age groups. The birth rate for unmarried women ages 15 to 17 increased from 21 to 32 per 1,000, and the rate for unmarried women ages 18 to 19 rose from 39 to 69 per 1,000. The birth rate for unmarried women ages 20 to 24 increased from 41 to 71 per 1,000. Between 1994 and 2001, birth rates by age declined for all women under age 20, and increased somewhat for women in age groups 20 to 24 through 40 to 44 years.[12,14,15]
- The long-term rise between 1960 and 1994 in the nonmarital birth rate is linked to a number of factors.[12] The proportion of women of childbearing age who are unmarried increased (from 29 percent in 1960 to 46 percent in 1994), concurrent with an increase in nonmarital cohabitation. About 25 percent of unmarried women aged 25 to 39 were in cohabiting relationships in 1995.[16] The likelihood that an unmarried woman will marry before the child is born declined steeply from the early 1960s to the early 1980s and continued to fall, although more modestly, through the early 1990s.[17] At the same time, childbearing within marriage declined: births to married women declined from 4 million in 1960 to 2.7 million in 1994, and the birth rate for married women fell from 157 per 1,000 in 1960 to 83 per 1,000 in 1994.[10-12,15] These measures stabilized in the mid- 1990s and then increased slowly, as the nonmarital birth rate steadied during this period.[12,15]
- Between 1994 and 2001, nonmarital birth rates by age changed relatively little, although rates for younger teens 15 to 17 fell nearly one-third. Rates in 2001 remained highest for women aged 20 to 24.[14,15]

Children are at greater risk for adverse consequences when born to a single mother because the social, emotional, and financial resources available to the family may be more limited.[9] The proportion of births to unmarried women is useful for understanding the extent to which children born in a given year may be affected by any disadvantage—social, financial, or health—associated with being born outside of marriage. The percentage of births to unmarried women is a function of several factors, including birth rates for married and unmarried women and the number of unmarried women.[18] Significant changes occurred in all these measures between 1980 and 2001.[11,12,19]

Figure POP7.B **Percentage of all births that are to unmarried women by age of mother, 1980 and 2001**



SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System.

- In 2001, 34 percent of all births were to unmarried women.
- The percentage of all births to unmarried women rose sharply from 18 percent in 1980 to 33 percent in 1994.[12] From 1994 to 2001, it has increased slightly to 34 percent.[10,12]
- Between 1980 and 2001, the proportions of births to unmarried women rose sharply for women in all age groups. Among teenagers, the proportions were high throughout the period and continued to rise, from 62 to 88 percent for ages 15 to 17 and from 40 to 75 percent for ages 18 to 19. The proportions more than doubled for births to women in their twenties, rising from 19 to 50 percent for ages 20 to 24 and from 9 to 24 percent for ages 25 to 29. The proportion of births to unmarried women in their thirties increased from 8 to 14 percent.[10,12]
- One-third of all births, including 4 in 10 first births, were to unmarried women in 2001. Nearly two-thirds of women under age 25 having their first child were not married.[20]
- The increases in the proportions of births to unmarried women, especially during the 1980s, are linked to sharp increases in the birth rates for unmarried women in all age groups during this period, concurrent with declines in birth rates for married women. In addition, the number of unmarried women increased by about one-fourth as more and more women from the baby-boom generation postponed marriage.[12,19]
- During the late 1990s, the pace of increase in the proportions slowed. The comparative stability is linked to a renewed rise in birth rates for married women.[10,12]

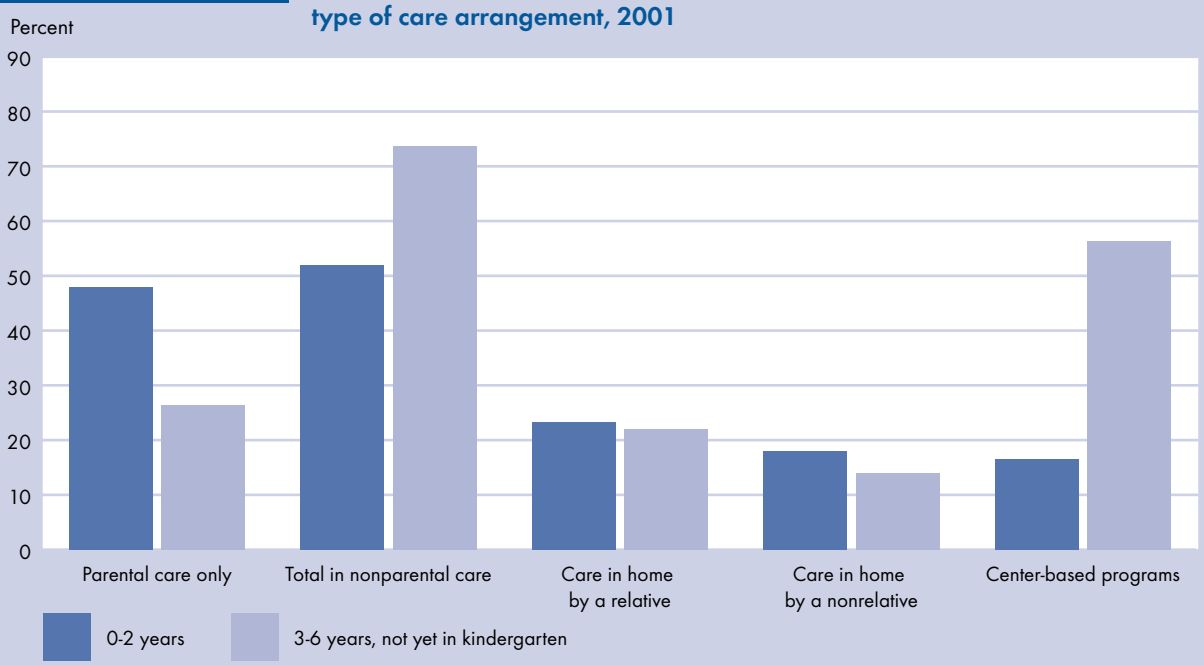
Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables POP7.A and POP7.B on page 82. Endnotes begin on page 63.

Child Care

Increasing proportions of children are spending substantial amounts of time in the care of a child care provider other than their parents. While researchers continue to assess the effects of child care on child development, it is important to monitor over time the way many children receive care. This measure presents two important aspects of child care usage for preschoolers: overall use of different provider types regardless of parents' work status (POP8.A) and a historical trend of the primary child care provider used by employed mothers for their preschoolers (POP8.B).[21]

Figure POP8.A

Percentage of children from birth through age six, not yet in kindergarten by type of care arrangement, 2001



NOTE: Some children participate in more than one type of arrangement, so the sum of all arrangement types exceeds the total percentage in nonparental care. Center-based programs include day care centers, prekindergartens, nursery schools, Head Start programs, and other early childhood education programs. Relative and nonrelative care can take place in either the child's own home or another home.

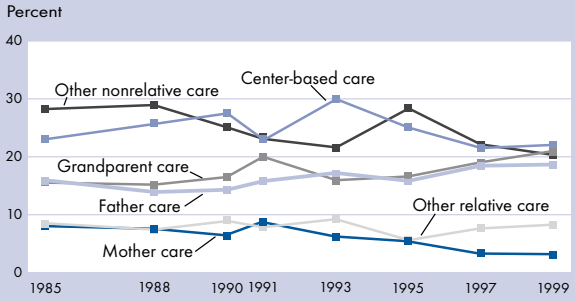
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey.

Figure POP8.A

- In 2001, 61 percent of children from birth through age 6 (not yet in kindergarten) received some form of child care on a regular basis from persons other than their parents. This translates to approximately 12 million children and is about the same proportion of children in child care as in 1995.
- The type of child care received is related to the age of the child. Children from birth through age 2 were more likely to be in home-based care, either with a relative or nonrelative, than to be in center-based care. Children ages 3 to 6 who were not yet in kindergarten were more likely to be in a center-based child care arrangement (including nursery schools and other early childhood education programs) than in home-based care with either a relative or a nonrelative.

Figure POP8.B

Percentage of preschoolers (children under age 5) of employed mothers by primary child care arrangement, selected years 1985-99[22]

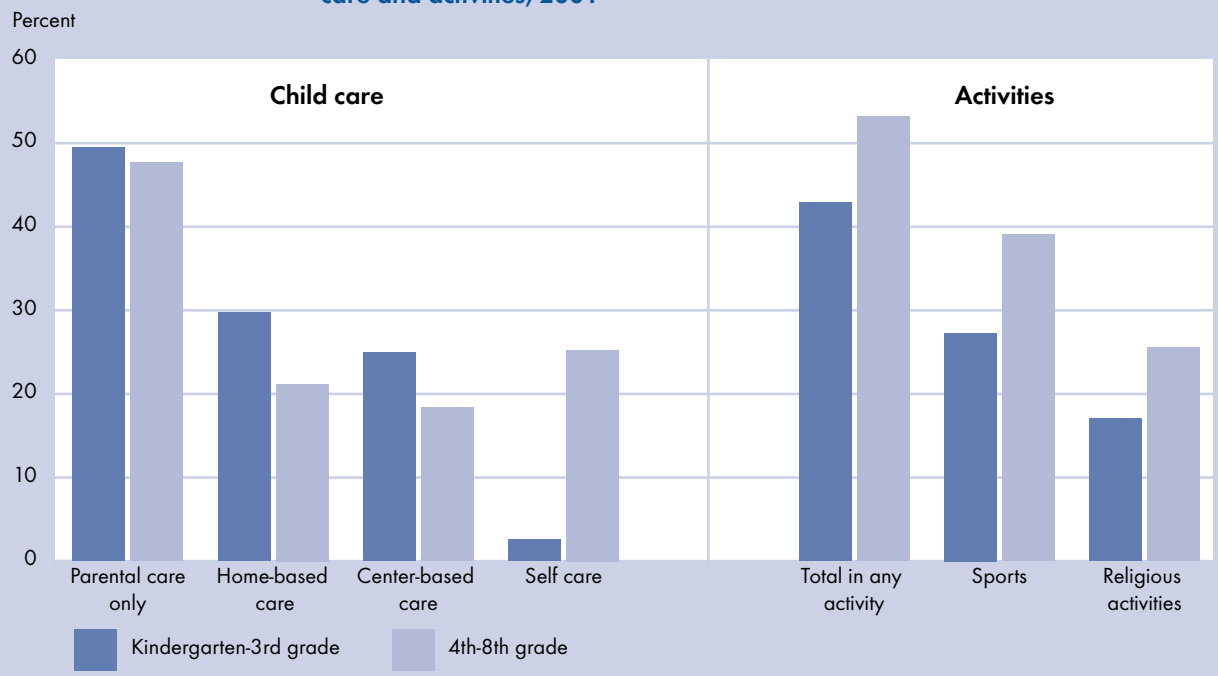


NOTE: The primary arrangement is the arrangement used for the longest number of hours per week while the mother worked.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Concern for the well-being of grade-school-age children has drawn attention to their child care arrangements and out-of-school activities, including time spent unsupervised.[23] School-age children spend their weekday, nonschool time in child care arrangements but also engage in a variety of enrichment activities such as sports, arts, clubs, academic activities, community service, and religious activities. Some of these children also spend time caring for themselves without adult supervision. This measure presents the most recent data on how grade-school-age children spend their out-of-school time.

Figure POP8.C Percentage of children in kindergarten through eighth grade by weekday care and activities, 2001



NOTE: Some children participate in more than one type of care arrangement or activity. For self care, parents reported that their child is responsible for himself/herself before or after school on a regular basis. Parents reported on organized before- or after-school activities that are undertaken by their child on a regular basis. For a full listing of activities, see Table POP8.C.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey.

Figure POP8.B

- In 1999, half of preschoolers (children under age 5) with employed mothers were primarily cared for by a relative while their mother worked, while 22 percent were primarily cared for by nonrelatives in a center-based arrangement and 20 percent by other nonrelatives in a home-based environment.
- In 1999, grandparents and other relatives were the primary child care provider for 21 percent and 8 percent of preschoolers of employed mothers, respectively.
- Families in poverty with an employed mother relied to a greater extent on grandparents (24 percent) or other relatives (13 percent) as their primary child care arrangement for their preschooler than did families not in poverty (20 percent and 7 percent, respectively).
- Higher proportions of preschoolers of employed mothers living at or above the poverty line were primarily cared for by a nonrelative (43 percent) than preschoolers living below the poverty line (38 percent) in 1999.

Figure POP8.C

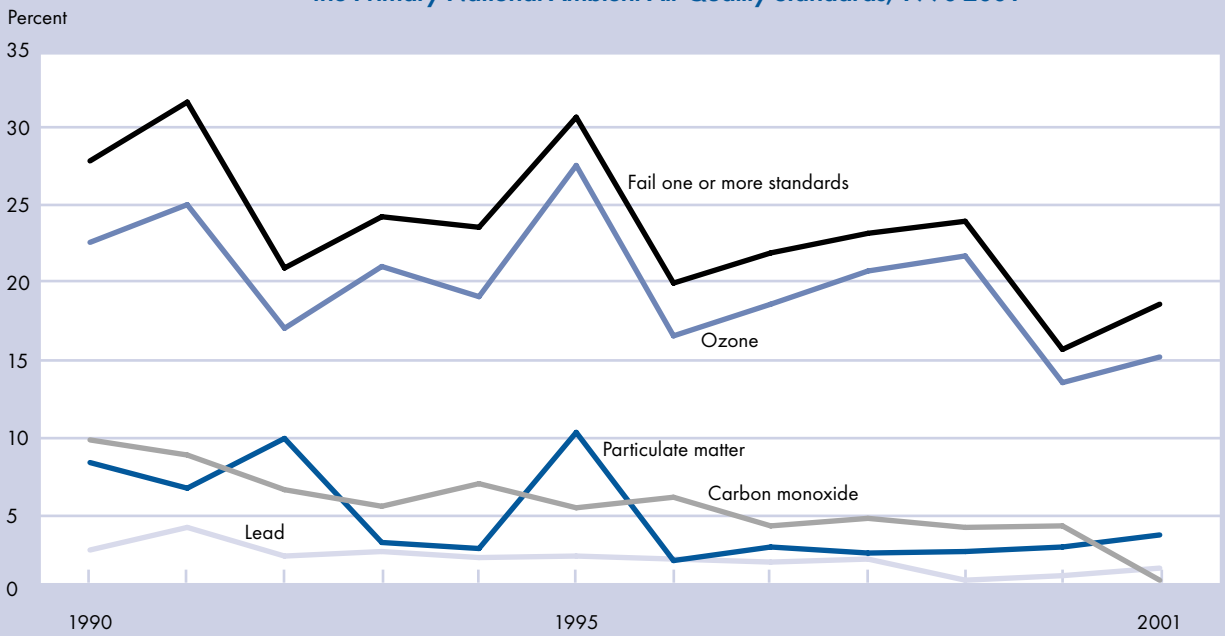
- About half (51 percent) of children in kindergarten through third grade and those in grades four to eight (52 percent) received some nonparental child care in 2001.
- Older children were more likely to care for themselves before or after school than younger children. Three percent of children in kindergarten through third grade and 25 percent of children in fourth through eighth grade cared for themselves regularly either before or after school.
- Children in the higher grades were more likely to engage in some kind of organized before- or after-school activity than were children in the lower grades. Children from families in poverty were less likely to participate in activities than children whose families were at or above poverty. Children in kindergarten through eighth grade were more likely to participate in sports than in any other activity.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables POP8.A-POP8.C on pages 83-85. Endnotes begin on page 63.

Children's Environments

The environment in which children live plays an important role in their health and development. Children need a clean, safe place in which they can grow and play. Children may be more vulnerable to environmental contaminants because of their increased potential for exposure to pollutants, since they eat, drink, and breathe more per body weight than adults. In addition, environmental contaminants in air, food, drinking water, and other sources are associated with a number of different ailments, and these contaminants may disproportionately affect children because they are still developing.[24-28] One important measure of environmental quality is the percentage of children living in areas that do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Polluted air is associated with increased asthma episodes and other respiratory illnesses. While air pollution is one important measure of children's environments, further research is needed to develop a more complete measure of overall environmental quality for children.

Figure POP9.A **Percentage of children under age 18 living in areas that do not meet one or more of the Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standards, 1990-2001**



NOTE: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has set national air quality standards for six principal pollutants: carbon monoxide (CO), lead (Pb), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), ozone (O_3), particulate matter (PM), and sulfur dioxide (SO_2). Nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide are not included in the graph because essentially all areas met the Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standards for these pollutants after 1991.

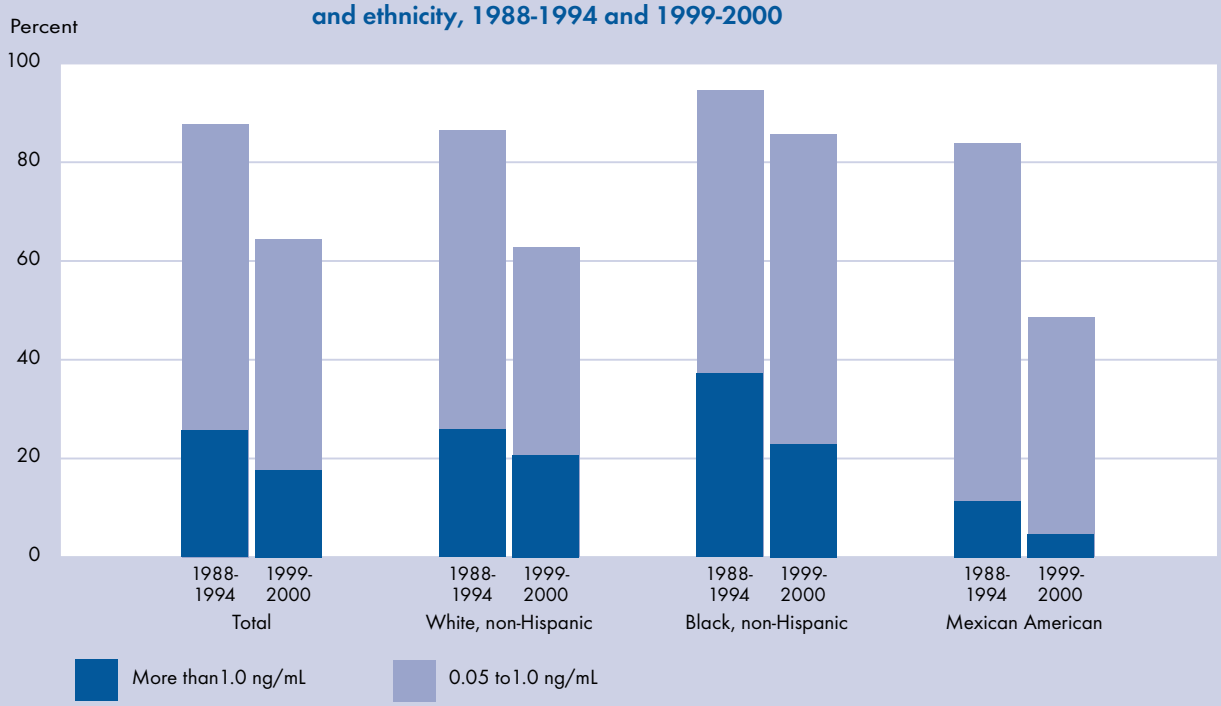
SOURCE: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Air and Radiation, Aerometric Information Retrieval System.

- In 2001, 19 percent of children lived in areas that did not meet one or more of the Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standards, an improvement from 28 percent in 1990. The Clean Air Act established Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standards which are designed to establish limits to protect public health, including the health of sensitive populations such as children and individuals with asthma.
- In 2001, 1 percent of children lived in areas that did not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for lead. High levels of lead are dangerous to children because they can lead to neurological and developmental problems.
- Figure POP9.A does not reflect the new standards for particulate matter and ozone being implemented by the Environmental Protection Agency to better protect public health, including children's health.
- Ozone accounts for most of the areas that do not meet the Primary National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Both particulate matter and ozone can cause respiratory problems and aggravate respiratory diseases, such as asthma, in children. These problems can lead to increased emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

Children who are exposed to environmental tobacco smoke, also known as secondhand smoke, have an increased probability of experiencing a number of adverse health effects, including infections of the lower respiratory tract, bronchitis, pneumonia, fluid in the middle ear, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).[29-31] Secondhand smoke can also play a role in the development and exacerbation of asthma.[32-38]

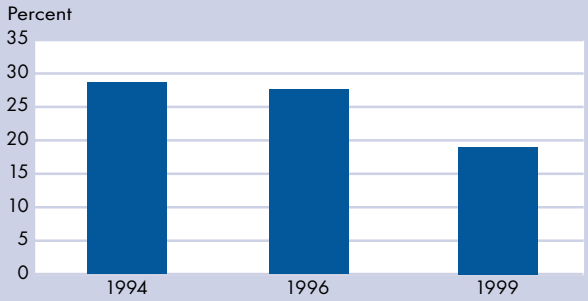
Cotinine, a breakdown product of nicotine, is a marker for recent (previous 1-2 days) exposure to secondhand smoke. The average (geometric mean) blood cotinine level in children living in homes where someone smokes is 1.0 ng/mL.[39]

Figure POP9.B **Percentage of children ages 4 to 11 with specified blood cotinine levels by race and ethnicity, 1988-1994 and 1999-2000**



NOTE: Cotinine is detectable at or above 0.05 nanograms per milliliter (ng/mL). Cotinine levels are reported for nonsmoking children only.
SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

Figure POP9.C **Percentage of households with children under age 7 where someone smokes regularly, selected years 1994-1999**



NOTE: Percentages represent households with survey respondent answering "yes" to this question: "Do you allow anyone to smoke in your home on a regular basis?"
SOURCE: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Air and Radiation, Survey on Radon Awareness and Environmental Tobacco Issues.

- Children's exposure to secondhand smoke, as indicated by blood cotinine levels, dropped between 1988-1994 and 1999-2000. Overall, 64 percent of children ages 4 to 11 had cotinine in their blood in 1999-2000, down from 88 percent in 1988-1994. In 1999-2000, 18 percent had blood cotinine levels more than 1.0 ng/mL, down from 26 percent in 1988-1994.
- Racial and ethnic disparities exist such that in 1999-2000, 86 percent of Black, non-Hispanic children ages 4 to 11 had cotinine in their blood compared with 63 percent of White, non-Hispanic children and 49 percent of Mexican American children. A smaller proportion of Mexican American children had blood cotinine levels more than 1.0 ng/mL compared with children of other racial groups.
- The percentage of homes with children under 7 in which someone smokes on a regular basis decreased from 29 percent in 1994 to 19 percent in 1999.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables POP9.A-POP9.C on pages 86 and 87. Endnotes begin on page 63.

Data Needed

Population and Family Characteristics

Current data collection systems at the national level do not provide extensive detailed information on children's lives, their families and their caregivers. Certain topical databases provide some of this information, but data needs to be collected across domains of child well-being regularly enough to discern trends in where, how, and with whom children spend their time. More data are also needed on:

- *Family interactions.* Increasing the detail of information collected about family structure and improving the measurement of cohabitation and family dynamics were among the key suggestions for improvement emerging from the 2001 Counting Couples Workshop, sponsored by the Forum. Other suggestions included increasing the information collected for nonresident parents, especially fathers; developing standard indicators to be included on multiple data collections; and including measures of family-related values and attitudes. More information from the workshop is available online at *http://www.childstats.gov.*
- *Time use.* A regular source of data is needed to track how and where children spend their time and how these patterns change over time. For example, valuable insights would be provided by data on how much time children spend in school, in day care, in after-school activities, using a computer, interacting with one or both parents, and how much time youth spend at work. Currently, Federal surveys collect information on the amount of time children spend on certain activities, such as watching television and on participation rates in specific activities or care arrangements, but no regular Federal data source examines time spent on the whole spectrum of children's activities. The inclusion in surveys of additional questions on time use by children and adults is currently being investigated by several member agencies of the Forum. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has initiated a continuous time use survey that will cover time invested in the care of children, as well as time spent in other labor market and non-labor market activities. The survey will also include responses from youth ages 15 and over. The initial results should be available in mid-2004.
- *Children's environments.* Further data are needed to monitor the environments of children and their potential exposure to environmental contaminants. In particular, data are needed to describe children's potential exposure to contaminants in drinking water and food.

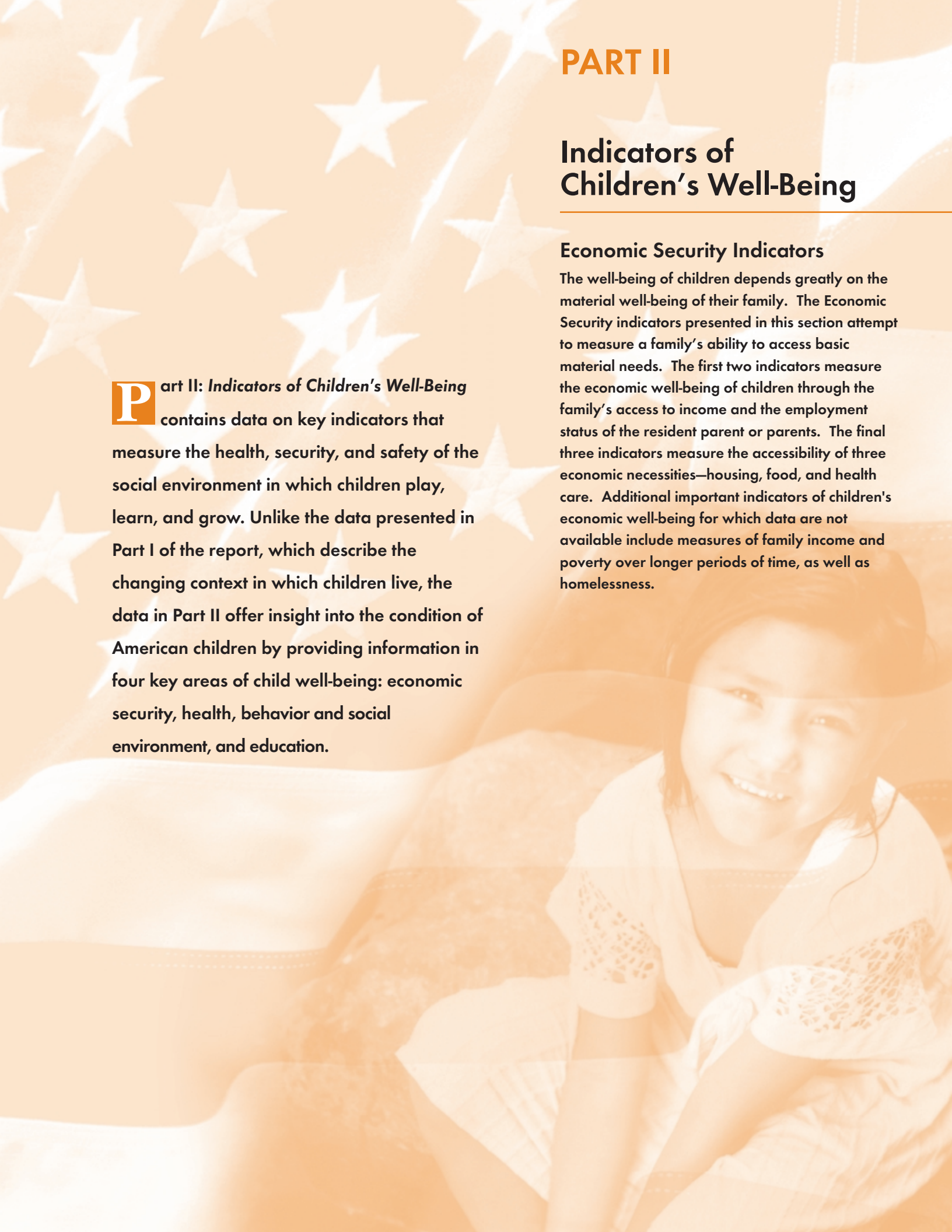
PART II

Indicators of Children's Well-Being

Part II: *Indicators of Children's Well-Being* contains data on key indicators that measure the health, security, and safety of the social environment in which children play, learn, and grow. Unlike the data presented in Part I of the report, which describe the changing context in which children live, the data in Part II offer insight into the condition of American children by providing information in four key areas of child well-being: economic security, health, behavior and social environment, and education.

Economic Security Indicators

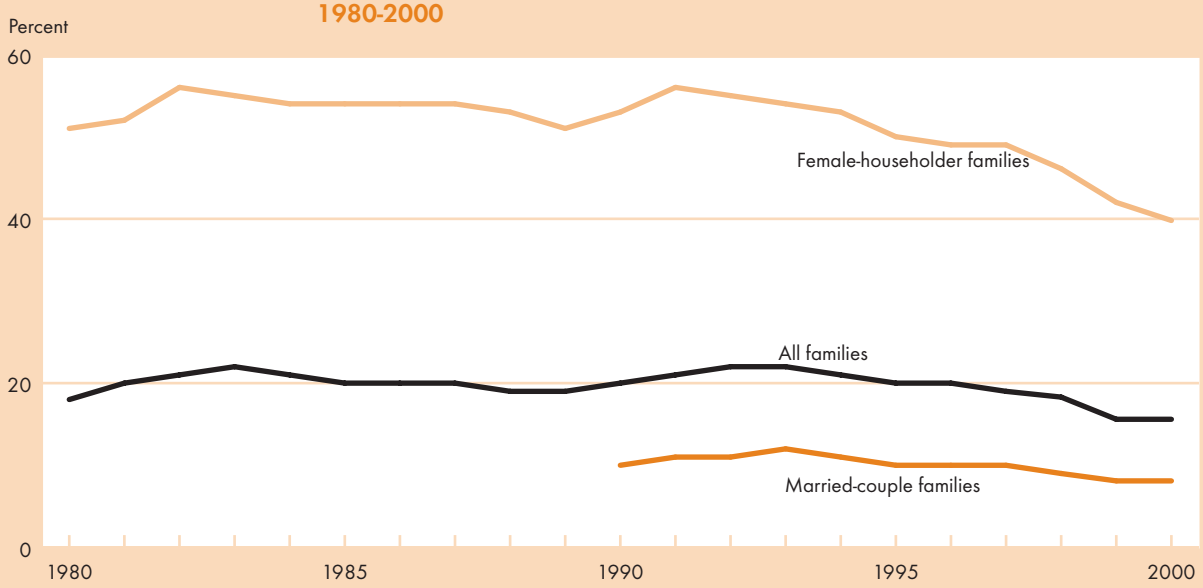
The well-being of children depends greatly on the material well-being of their family. The Economic Security indicators presented in this section attempt to measure a family's ability to access basic material needs. The first two indicators measure the economic well-being of children through the family's access to income and the employment status of the resident parent or parents. The final three indicators measure the accessibility of three economic necessities—housing, food, and health care. Additional important indicators of children's economic well-being for which data are not available include measures of family income and poverty over longer periods of time, as well as homelessness.



Child Poverty and Family Income

Childhood poverty has both immediate and lasting negative effects. Children in low-income families fare less well than children in more affluent families for many of the indicators presented in this report, including indicators in the areas of economic security, health, and education. Compared with children living in families above the poverty line, children living below the poverty line are more likely to have difficulty in school,[22] to become teen parents,[23] and, as adults, to earn less and be unemployed more frequently.[22] The child poverty rate provides important information about the percentage of U.S. children whose current circumstances make life difficult and jeopardize their future economic well-being.

Indicator ECON1.A **Percentage of related children under age 18 in poverty by family structure, 1980-2000**



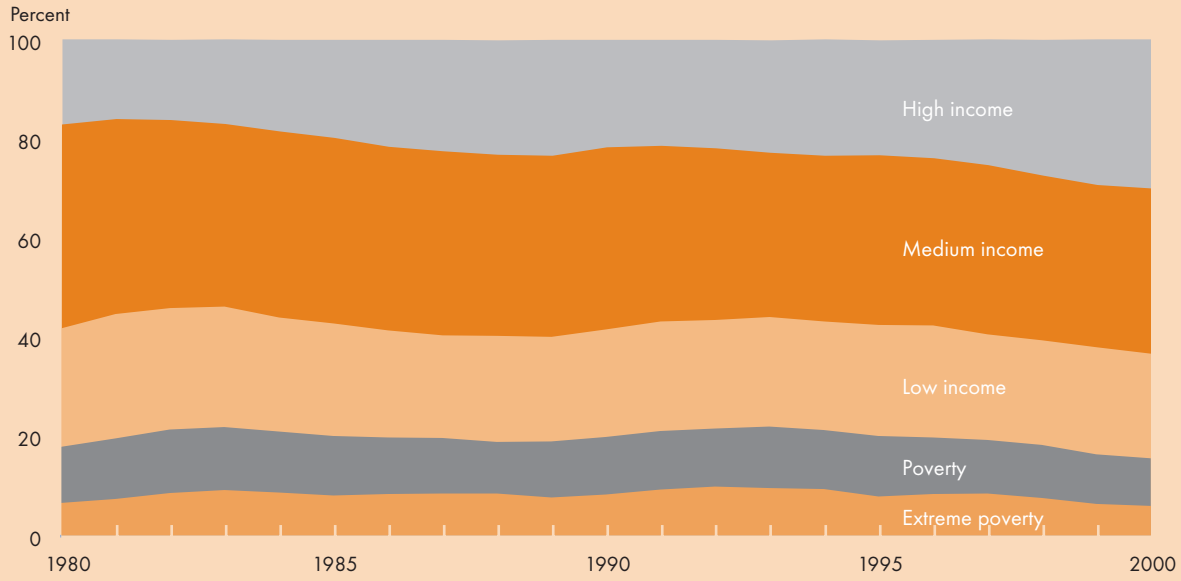
NOTE: Estimates refer to children who are related to the householder and who are under age 18. In 2000, the average poverty threshold for a family of four was $17,603 in annual income.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, March Current Population Survey.

- The proportion of children living in families with incomes below the poverty threshold was 16 percent in 2000. The official poverty rate for children has fluctuated since the early 1980s: it reached a high of 22 percent in 1993 and has since decreased to 16 percent, the lowest rate since 1979. In response to the National Academy of Science's recommendations, the Census Bureau is researching alternative poverty measures.[24]
- This decrease in the poverty rate is also apparent for children living in female-householder (no spouse present) families. In 1980, 51 percent of children living in female-householder (no spouse present) families were living in poverty; by 2000, this proportion had decreased to 40 percent. This change is even more pronounced for black children: the percentage of black children living in female-householder families in poverty wavered around 66 percent until 1993 and has since declined to 49 percent in 2000.
- Children under age 6 are more likely to be living in families with incomes below the poverty line than children ages 6 to 17. In 2000, 17 percent of children under age 6 lived in poverty, compared with 15 percent of older children.
- Children in married-couple families are much less likely to be living in poverty than children living only with their mothers. In 2000, 8 percent of children in married-couple families were living in poverty, compared with 40 percent in female-householder families.
- This contrast by family structure is especially pronounced among certain racial and ethnic groups. For example, in 2000, 8 percent of black children in married-couple families lived in poverty, compared with 49 percent of black children in female-householder families. Twenty-one percent of Hispanic children in married-couple families lived in poverty, compared with 48 percent in female-householder families.
- The poverty rate is much higher for black or Hispanic children than for white, non-Hispanic children. In 2000, 9 percent of white, non-Hispanic children lived in poverty, compared with 30 percent of black children and 27 percent of Hispanic children.
- In 2000, 6 percent of all children lived in families with incomes less than half the poverty level, or $8,802 a year on average for a family of four, while 26 percent of children lived in families with incomes less than 150 percent of the poverty level, or $26,405 a year on average for a family of four.

The full distribution of the income of children's families is important, not just the percentage of children living in poverty. The rise in the number of children living in affluent families tells us that a growing proportion of America's children live in households experiencing economic well-being. The growing gap between rich and poor children suggests that poor children may experience more relative deprivation even if the percentage of poor children is declining.

Indicator ECON1.B **Percentage of related children under age 18 by family income relative to the poverty line, 1980-2000**



NOTE: Estimates refer to children who are related to the householder and who are under age 18. The income classes are derived from the ratio of the family's income to the family's poverty threshold. Extreme poverty is less than 50 percent of the poverty threshold (i.e., $8,802 for a family of four in 2000). Poverty is between 50 and 99 percent of the poverty threshold (i.e., between $8,802 and $17,602 for a family of four in 2000). Low income is between 100 and 199 percent of the poverty threshold (i.e., between $17,603 and $35,205 for a family of four in 2000). Medium income is between 200 and 399 percent of the poverty threshold (i.e., between $35,206 and $70,411 for a family of four in 2000). High income is 400 percent of the poverty threshold or more (i.e., more than $70,412 for a family of four in 2000).[25]

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, March Current Population Survey.

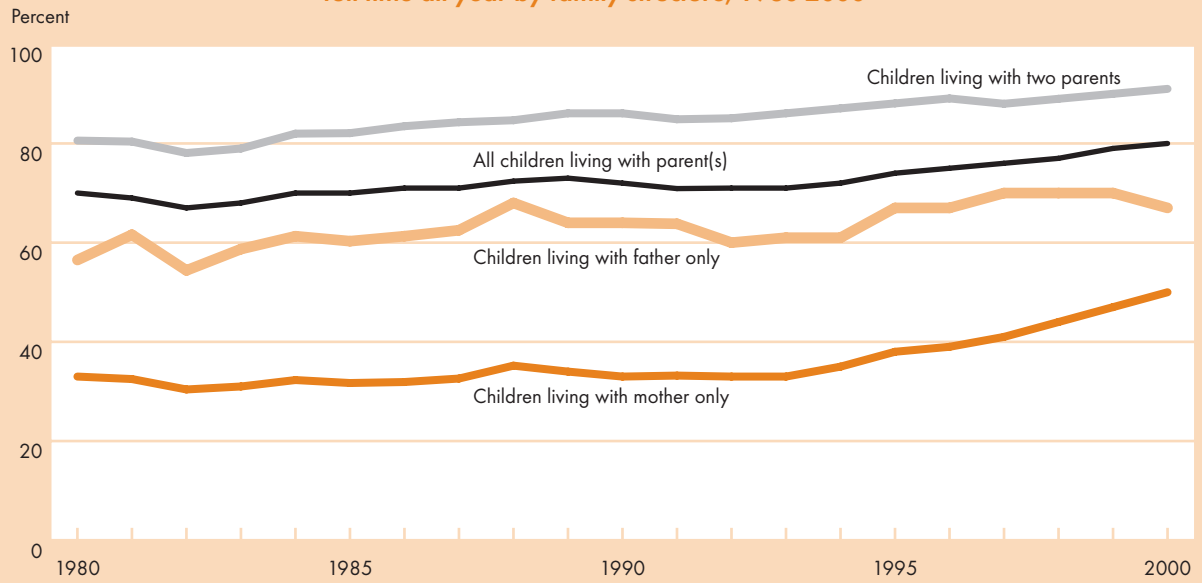
- In 2000, more children lived in families with medium income (34 percent) than in other income groups. Smaller percentages of children lived in families with low income and with high income (21 and 30 percent, respectively).
- The percentage of children living in families with medium income fell from 41 percent in 1980 to 34 percent in 2000, while the percentage of children living in families with high income rose from 17 to 30 percent.
- The percentage of children living in families experiencing extreme poverty was 7 percent in 1980. This percentage rose to 10 percent in 1992 and has gradually decreased to 6 percent in 2000. Concurrently, three times as many children lived in families with very high income in 2000 than in 1980 (13 and 4 percent, respectively).

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables ECON1.A and ECON1.B on pages 79-80. Endnotes begin on page 59.

Secure Parental Employment

Secure parental employment reduces the incidence of poverty and its attendant risks to children. Since most parents who obtain health insurance for themselves and their children do so through their employers, a secure job can also be a key variable in determining whether children have access to health care. Secure parental employment may also enhance children's psychological well-being and improve family functioning by reducing stress and other negative effects that unemployment and underemployment can have on parents.[26,27] One measure of secure parental employment is the percentage of children whose resident parent or parents were employed full time during a given year.

Indicator ECON2 **Percentage of children under age 18 living with at least one parent employed full time all year by family structure, 1980-2000**



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, March Current Population Survey.

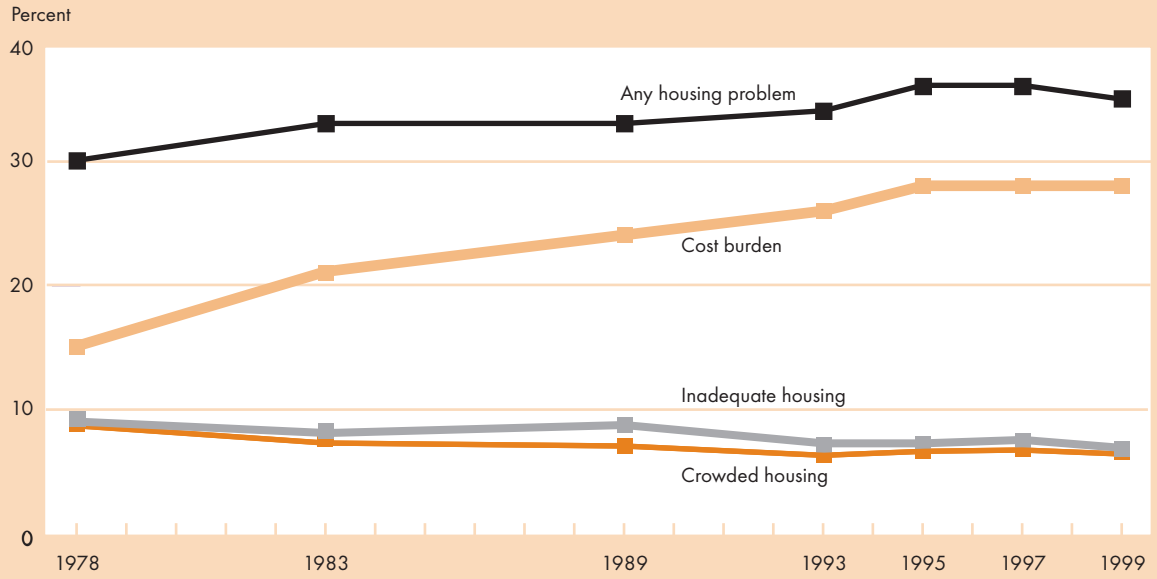
- Since 1990, the trend in secure parental employment has paralleled the overall trend in employment. The percentage of children who had at least one parent working full time all year continued to increase in 2000 to 80 percent from 79 percent in 1999.
- A disproportionate share of the increase in the percentage of children living with at least one parent employed full time all year was due to the increase in the percentage of children living with single mothers who are employed, which increased from 33 percent in 1993 to 50 percent in 2000.
- In 2000, 91 percent of children living in two-parent families had at least one parent who was a full-time, year-round worker. In contrast, 67 percent of children living with a single father and 50 percent of children living with a single mother had a parent who worked full time all year.
- Children living in poverty are much less likely to have a parent working full time all year than children living at or above the poverty line (35 percent and 89 percent in 2000, respectively). For children living with two parents, 59 percent of children living at or below the poverty line had at least one parent working full time all year, compared with 94 percent of children living above poverty.
- In recent years, however, children living below the poverty line have become increasingly likely to have one or two parents working full time all year. In 1993, 21 percent of children below poverty had at least one parent working full time all year. By 2000, this statistic had risen to 35 percent.
- Black, non-Hispanic children and Hispanic children were less likely than white, non-Hispanic children to have a parent working full time all year. However, the proportions of black, non-Hispanic children and Hispanic children with a parent employed full time all year have increased much faster than for white, non-Hispanic children. Between 1993 and 2000, the percentage of children who had a parent working full time all year increased from 49 percent to 69 percent for black, non-Hispanic children, and from 57 percent to 72 percent for Hispanic children. In comparison, the percentage of white, non-Hispanic children that had a parent working full time all year increased from 79 percent to 85 percent during the same period.
- During the past two decades, the percentage of children living in two-parent families in which both the mother and father worked full time all year has almost doubled, increasing from 17 to 33 percent.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table ECON2 on pages 81-82. Endnotes begin on page 59.

Housing Problems

Inadequate, crowded, or costly housing can pose serious problems to children's physical, psychological, or material well-being.[28] The percentage of households with children that report that they are living in physically inadequate,[29] crowded, and/or costly housing provides an estimate of the percentage of children whose well-being may be affected by their family's housing.

Indicator ECON3 **Percentage of households with children under age 18 that report housing problems by type of problem, selected years 1978-99**



NOTE: Data are available for 1978, 1983, 1989, 1993, 1995, 1997, and 1999.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Annual Housing Survey and American Housing Survey. Tabulated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

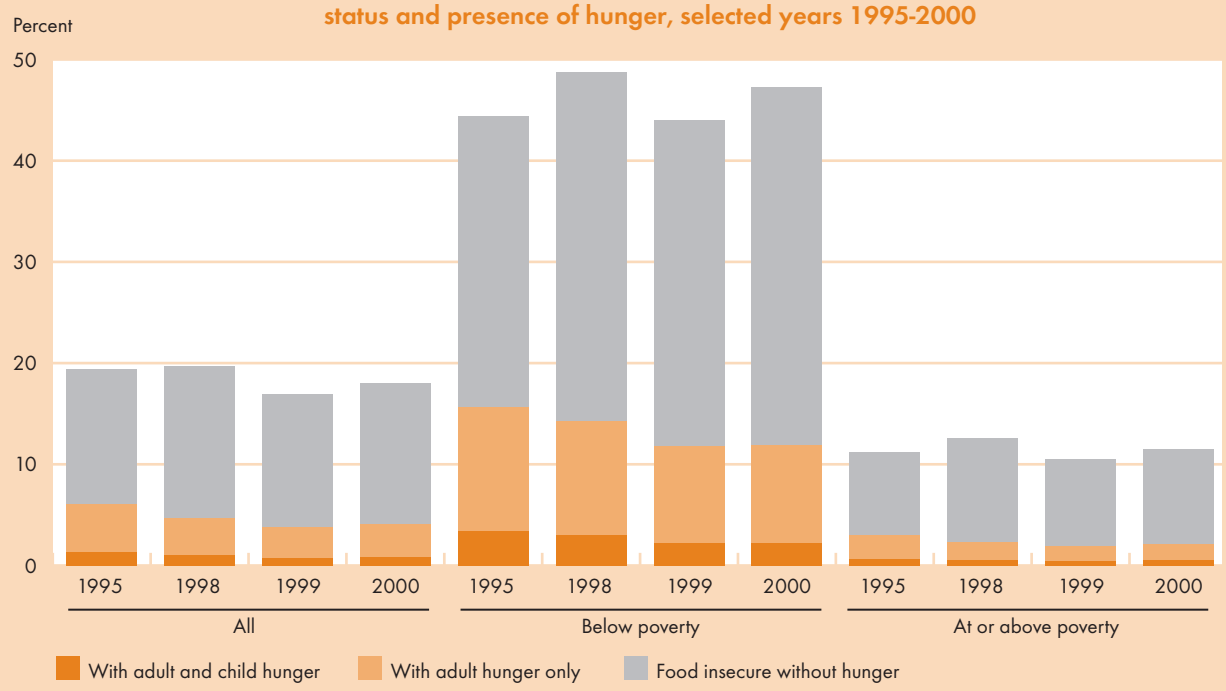
- In 1999, 35 percent of U.S. households (both owners and renters) with children had one or more of three housing problems: physically inadequate housing, crowded housing, or housing that cost more than 30 percent of household income.[30]
- The share of U.S. households with children that have any housing problems rose between 1978 and 1995 and has since stabilized.
- Inadequate housing, defined as housing with severe or moderate physical problems, has become slightly less common. In 1999, 7 percent of households with children had inadequate housing, compared with 9 percent in 1978.
- Crowded housing, defined as housing in which there is more than one person per room, has also declined slightly among households with children, from 9 percent in 1978 to 7 percent in 1999.
- Improvements in housing conditions, however, have been accompanied by rising housing costs. Between 1978 and 1999, the percentage of households with children with a cost burden—that is, paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing—rose from 15 percent to 28 percent. The percentage with severe cost burdens, paying more than half of their income for housing, rose from 6 to 11 percent.
- Households that receive no rental assistance and have severe cost burdens or physical problems are defined as having severe housing problems.[31] In 1999, 11 percent of households with children had severe housing problems. Although the 1997 and 1999 data are not directly comparable to estimates for earlier years, severe housing problems increased from 8 percent in 1978 to 12 percent in 1995 because of a rise in the percentage of families reporting severe cost burdens.
- Severe housing problems are especially prevalent among very-low-income renters.[32] In 1999, 29 percent of very-low-income renter households with children reported severe housing problems, with severe cost burden the major problem. Although the percentage of these families having severe housing problems has fallen since 1978, the number with such problems grew from 1.4 million in 1978 to 1.8 million in 1999, again because the number of households with severe cost burdens rose.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table ECON3 on page 83. Endnotes begin on page 59.

Food Security and Diet Quality

Children's good health and development depend on a diet sufficient in nutrients and calories. A family's ability to provide for their children's nutritional needs is linked to the family's food security—that is, to its access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.[33] Food-insecure households report difficulty obtaining enough food, reduced diet quality, anxiety about their food supply, increased use of emergency food sources or other coping behaviors, and, sometimes, hunger. Previous reports of *America's Children* included the number of children in households where at least one member (either an adult or a child) experienced food insecurity or hunger. However, children—especially younger children—in such households are usually protected from substantial reductions in food intake. Thus, this report introduces an additional measure: the number of children in households where at least one child registered hunger at some time during the year because the household lacked sufficient money for food.[34]

Indicator ECON4.A **Percentage of children under age 18 in food-insecure households by poverty status and presence of hunger, selected years 1995-2000**



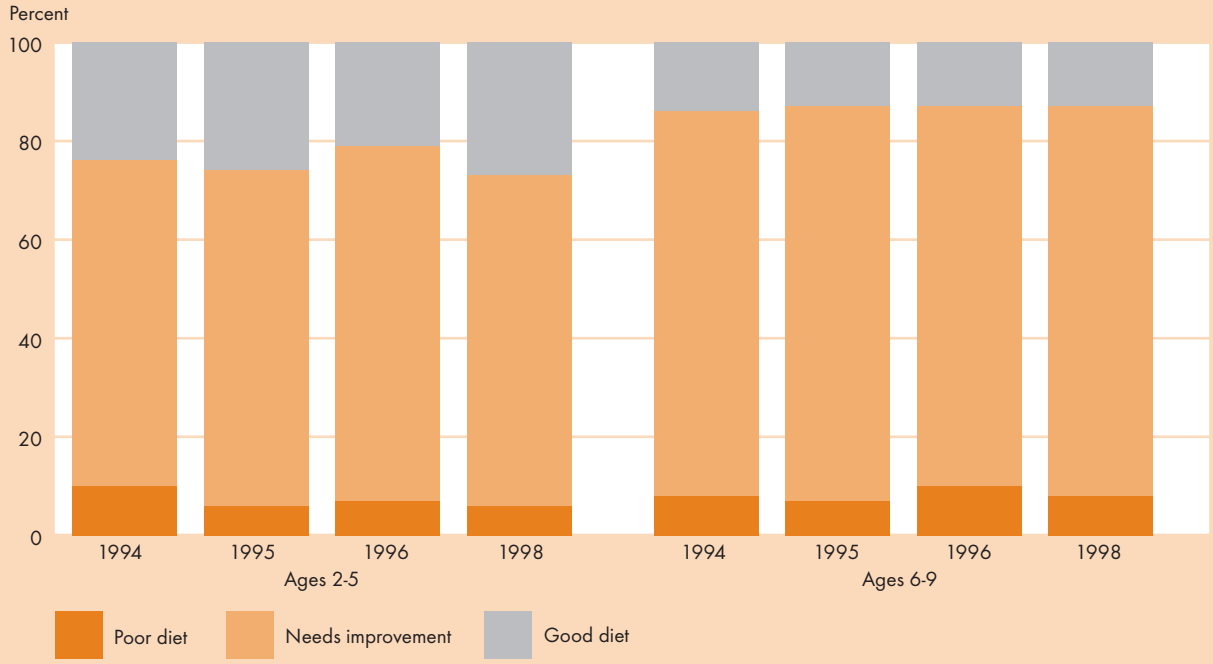
NOTE: These statistics are based on a new measure of hunger among children in U.S. households, replacing the measure previously reported in *America's Children*. Data are not shown for 1996 and 1997 because differences in screening procedures make them not comparable to the other years. Year-to-year deviations from a consistent downward trend include a substantial 2-year cycle that may result from a seasonal influence on reported prevalence rates. To avoid a potential bias related to season of survey, rates for 2000 are compared to1998 throughout this report.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Food Security Supplement to the Current Population Survey; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service and Food and Nutrition Service.

- Over half a million children (0.8 percent) lived in households with child hunger in 2000, down from 1.0 percent in 1998. In 2000, 4.1 percent of all children lived in households in which at least one person experienced food insecurity with hunger, down from 4.7 percent in 1998.
- Children living in households with incomes below poverty are much more likely than others to experience food insecurity and hunger. In 2000, about 2.2 percent of the children living in poverty were in households with hunger among children, compared with 0.5 percent of children living at or above poverty. In 2000, 11.9 percent of children living in poverty were part of households with hunger among adults or children, compared with 2.1 percent of children living at or above poverty.
- Most food-insecure households with children do not report hunger among household members. For example, although 18 percent of households were food insecure in 2000, less than 1 percent reported adult and child hunger.
- In 2000, 13.9 percent of all children and 35.3 percent of children in poverty lived in households classified as food insecure without hunger.

The diet quality of children and adolescents is of concern because poor eating patterns established in childhood usually transfer to adulthood. Such patterns are major factors in the increasing rate of child obesity over the past decades and are contributing factors to certain diseases. The Healthy Eating Index (HEI) is a summary measure of diet quality. The HEI consists of 10 components, each representing different aspects of a healthful diet. Components 1 to 5 measure the degree to which a person's diet conforms to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Guide Pyramid serving recommendations for the five major food groups: grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, and meat/meat alternatives. Components 6 and 7 measure fat and saturated fat consumption. Components 8 and 9 measure cholesterol intake and sodium intake, and component 10 measures the degree of variety in a person's diet. Scores for each component are given equal weight and added to calculate an overall HEI score. This overall HEI score is then used to determine diet quality based on a scale established by nutrition experts.[35]

Indicator ECON4.B **Percentage of children ages 2 to 9 by age and diet quality as measured by the Healthy Eating Index, selected years 1994-1998**



NOTE: The maximum combined score for the 10 components is 100. An HEI score above 80 implies a good diet, an HEI score between 51 and 80 implies a diet that needs improvement, and an HEI score less than 51 implies a poor diet.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals.

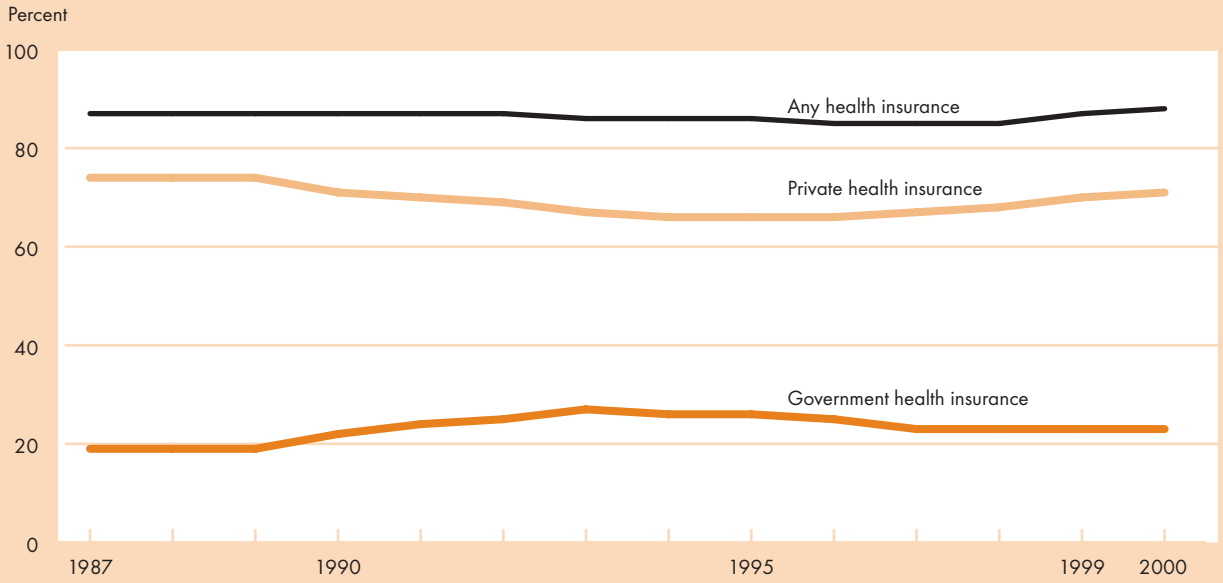
- In 1998, most children had a diet that was poor or needed improvement, as indicated by their HEI score.
- The proportion of children ages 2 to 5 with good diets improved from 21 percent to 27 percent between 1996 and 1998, more than the reversing decline from 1995 to 1996.
- The diet quality of children ages 6 to 9 changed little between 1996 to 1998.
- As children get older, their diet quality declines. In 1998, among children ages 2 to 5, 27 percent had a good diet, 67 percent had a diet needing improvement, and 6 percent had a poor diet. For those ages 6 to 9, 13 percent had a good diet, 79 percent had a diet needing improvement, and 8 percent had a poor diet.
- The lower-quality diets of older children are linked to declines in their fruit and sodium consumption scores.
- Children in families below poverty are less likely than higher-income children to have a diet rated as good. In 1998, for children ages 2 to 5, 22 percent of those in poverty had a good diet, compared with 29 percent of those living above the poverty line.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables ECON4.A - ECON4.D on pages 84-86. Endnotes begin on page 59.

Access to Health Care

Children with access to health care have reasonable assurance of obtaining the medical attention needed to maintain their physical well-being. Access involves both the availability of a regular source of care and the ability of the child's family, or someone else, to pay for it. Children with health insurance (government or private) are much more likely than children without insurance to have a regular and accessible source of health care. The percentage of children who have health insurance coverage for at least part of the year is one measure of the extent to which families can obtain preventive care or health care for a sick or injured child.

Indicator ECON5.A **Percentage of children under age 18 covered by health insurance by type of health insurance, 1987-2000**



NOTE: Government health insurance for children consists primarily of Medicaid, but also includes Medicare, SCHIP (the State Children's Health Insurance Programs), and CHAMPUS/Tricare, the health benefit program for members of the armed forces and their dependents. Estimates beginning in 1999 include follow-up questions to verify health insurance status. Estimates for 1999 and 2000 are not directly comparable with earlier years, before the verification questions were added.

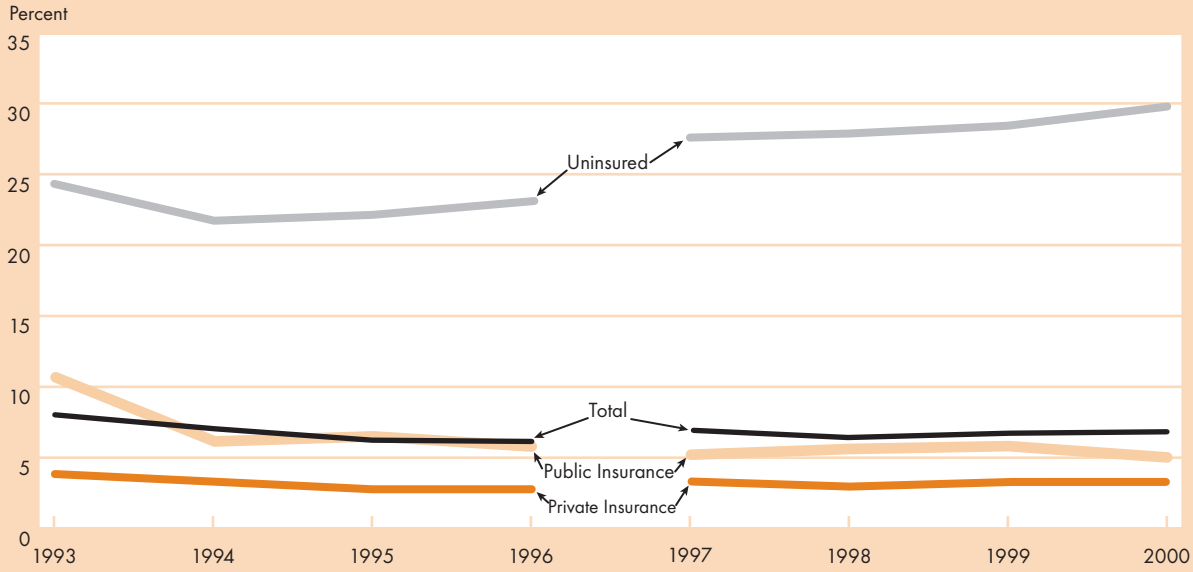
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, March Current Population Survey.

- In 2000, 88 percent of children had health insurance coverage at some point during the year. Between 85 and 88 percent of children have had health insurance in each year since 1987.
- The number of children who had no health insurance at any time during 2000 was 8.4 million (12 percent of all children). This was significantly lower than the 1999 number and percent of 9.1 million and 13 percent.
- The proportion of children covered by private health insurance decreased from 74 percent in 1987 to 66 percent in 1994 and then increased to 71 percent in 2000. During the same time period, the proportion of children covered by government health insurance grew from 19 percent in 1987 to a high of 27 percent in 1993; it has since decreased to 23 percent in 1997 and has been fairly stable.[36]
- Hispanic children are less likely to have health insurance than either white, non-Hispanic or black children. In 2000, 75 percent of Hispanic children were covered by health insurance, compared with 93 percent of white, non-Hispanic children and 87 percent of black children.
- Overall rates of coverage do not differ by child's age. However, the type of insurance does vary by the age of the child: government-provided insurance decreases but private health insurance increases with age.

The health of children depends at least partially on their access to health services. Health care for children includes physical examinations, preventive care, health education, observations, screening, immunizations, and sick care.[37] Having a usual source of care—a particular person or place a child goes for sick and preventive care—facilitates the timely and appropriate use of pediatric services.[38,39] Emergency rooms are excluded here as a usual source of care because their focus on emergency care generally excludes the other elements of health care.[40]

Indicator ECON5.B

Percentage of children under age 18 with no usual source of health care by type of health insurance, 1993-2000



NOTE: Emergency rooms are excluded as a usual source of care. A break is shown in the lines because in 1997, the National Health Interview Survey was redesigned. Data for 1997-2000 are not strictly comparable with earlier data.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey.

- In 2000, 7 percent of children had no usual source of health care. Between 1993 and 2000, this overall percentage remained relatively stable.
- There are differences by health insurance coverage in the percentage of children having no usual source of care. In 2000, children with public insurance, such as Medicaid, were more likely to have no usual source of care than were children with private insurance (5 percent and 3 percent, respectively).
- Uninsured children are much more likely to have no usual source of care than are children who have health insurance. Children who were uninsured were nearly nine times as likely as those with private insurance to have no usual source of care in 2000.
- In 2000, 12 percent of children in families below the poverty line had no usual source of care, compared with 6 percent of children in higher-income families.
- Older children are slightly more likely than younger children to lack a usual source of health care. In 2000, 8 percent of children ages 5 to 17 had no usual source of care, compared with 5 percent of children ages 0 to 4.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables ECON5.A and ECON5.B on pages 87-88. Endnotes begin on page 59.

Indicators Needed

Economic Security

Economic security is multifaceted, and several measures are needed to adequately represent its various aspects. While this year's report provides some information on economic and food security, additional indicators are needed on:

- *Economic security.* Changes in children's economic well-being over time need to be anchored in an average standard of living context. Multiple measures of family income or consumption, some of which might incorporate estimates of various family assets, could produce more reliable estimates of changes in children's economic well-being over time.
- *Long-term poverty among families with children.* Although good Federal data are available on child poverty and alternative measures are being developed (see Indicator ECON1, Child Poverty and Family Income, and the discussion of alternative poverty rates on page 80), the surveys that collect these data do not capture information on long-term poverty. Long-term poverty among children can be estimated from existing longitudinal surveys, but changes to current surveys would be needed to provide estimates on a regular basis. Since long-term poverty can have serious negative consequences for children's well-being, regularly collected and reported data are needed to produce regular estimates.
- *Homelessness.* At present, there are no regularly collected data on the number of homeless children in the United States, although there have been occasional studies aimed at estimating this number.